

Book notices

Inge Hofmann: *Nubisches Wörterverzeichnis: Nubisch-deutsches und deutsch-nubisches Wörterverzeichnis nach dem Kenzi-Material des Samuel Ali Hisen (1863-1927)*. (Collectanea Instituti Anthropos, 35.) Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1986.

The study of the Nubian languages spoken in the Nile Valley has a long tradition that goes back to the middle of the last century. The early researchers on Nubian shared the opinion that Nile Nubian was one language split into three or four dialects: Kenzi, Dongolawi, Mahas, and Fadicca or Mahas-Fadicca. In the course of the century it became more and more obvious that Kenzi and Dongolawi are not mutually intelligible with Mahas-Fadicca, the latter being now called Nobiin in accordance with the self-designation of its speakers. Linguists today acknowledge the existence of two Nubian languages spoken in the Nile Valley, one consisting of the closely related dialects Kenzi-Dongolawi, the other of Nobiin.

The Kenzi people used to live in Upper Egypt north of Korosko. After the erection of the Assuan High Dam in the mid sixties they had to leave their homeland on the banks of the Nile and were resettled in the area of Kom Ombo. This resettlement, to a large extent, destroyed the traditional Nubian way of life. As a consequence, both the language use and the Nubians' attitude towards their mother tongue also changed radically. In a recent work on the Kenzi language in contemporary Egypt Aleya Rouchdy (1991) predicts that the Kenzi language will soon be replaced by Arabic.

The Kenzi language is of some interest for historical as well as dialectological studies in at least two respects. The first lies in the noteworthy geographical distribution of the two closely related dialects Kenzi and Dongolawi. Their area of settlement is separated by that of the Nobiin speaking Nubians, a curious situation that led earlier researchers to the erroneous assumption that the Nobiin were late intruders into the Nile Valley. The other remarkable fact about the Kenzi language is that on the basis of non-linguistic information we are able to date the emergence of its independent status as a dialect different from Dongolawi with some certainty. The present day Kenzi people seem to be descendants of the Beni Kanz, who were originally a part of the Rabi'a tribe who migrated from the Arabian peninsula to Upper Egypt in the early Middle Ages. They married Nubian women from Dongola, and one offspring of such an intermarriage, Kanz ed-Dawla became Nubian king in Dongola in 1323. Forty years later, however, the Beni Kanz had to withdraw to their original area around Assuan where they settled from then on. It is now generally agreed that the term *Kenzi* began to be used to refer